

APPENDIX 10. MEMORANDUM REGARDING CONCEPT OF “HABITAT SECURITY” FOR GRIZZLY BEARS

Interim direction for the management of suitable but unoccupied grizzly bear habitat in the Bitterroot Ecosystem (BE) was issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service in a 6 November 1995 Memorandum. The memorandum was issued to the Clearwater, Nez Perce, and Bitterroot National Forests (Nez Perce letter is included as an example, see attached documents). Until an EIS for implementing recovery actions is completed, the following management direction is to be followed: “In the interim, the Forest Supervisors responsible for managing the Selway-Bitterroot evaluation area have agreed to protect suitable grizzly bear habitats by assuring that big game standards are in compliance with Forest Plans.”

Standards and guidelines for the management of big game habitat that lies within the Bitterroot Evaluation Area (BEA) (see Figure 3-6) were taken from the Clearwater, Nez Perce, and Idaho Panhandle National Forests. The standards and guidelines for big game habitat management on the Clearwater Forest were reviewed by an interagency group of biologists on 4 May 1995. The group agreed that current standards and guidelines for wildlife and fisheries habitat management appeared adequate to protect bear habitat in the interim. This consensus was reached by reviewing current and projected road densities and limitations due to elk guidelines, bull trout, and other fisheries guidelines for the Clearwater Forest; the juxtaposition of management allocations per the Forest Plan; and known road density requirements for grizzly bear management. The same technique was also used to review the Nez Perce, Lolo, Bitterroot, and Panhandle National Forest lands within the BEA with the added road restrictions implemented for PACFISH direction for anadromous fisheries management. Management areas and road densities for the BEA are grouped and identified below (USFS unpubl. data; S. Blair and D. Davis, Pers. Comm. 1996) (Tables 6-13, 6-14, 6-15).

Table 6-13. Current estimates of road miles within the Nez Perce and Clearwater Forests portion of the BEA.

Management Area Type	Percent of Area (%)	Open Road (mi)	Restricted Road (mi)	Total Road (mi)
Roaded / developed lands (154,500 acres approx.)	8 (2/6) ^a	103 (38 / 65)	41 (21 / 20)	144 (59 / 85)
Unroaded / essentially undeveloped (629,456 acres approx.)	33 (10 / 23)	141 (25 / 116)	60 (50 / 10)	201 (75 / 126)
Wilderness & proposed lands (Selway-Bitterroot & Frank Church-RNRW) (1,118,024 acres approx.)	59 (49 / 10)	0	0	0

^a Table data presented in format: Total for both Forests (Nez Perce Data / Clearwater Data).

Chapter 6 - Appendix 10

Table 6-14. Current estimates of road densities within the Nez Perce and Clearwater Forests portion of the BEA.

Management Area Type	Open Road (Mi/mi sq.)	Restricted Road (Mi/mi sq.)	Total Road (Mi/mi sq.)
Roaded / developed lands	0.43 (0.7 / 0.35) ^a	0.17 (0.38 / 0.10)	0.60 (1.08 / 0.45) ^b
Unroaded / essentially undeveloped	0.14 (0.08 / 0.17)	0.06 (0.16 / 0.01)	0.20 (0.24 / 0.18)
Wilderness & proposed lands (Selway-Bitterroot & FCRNRW)	0	0	0

^a Table data presented in format: Total for both Forests (Nez Perce Data / Clearwater Data).

^b A separate analysis determined the area of roaded / developed lands having greater than 2 miles / square mile total road density for each Forest. Nez Perce Forest = approximately 60 sections (38,400 acres); Clearwater Forest = approximately 12 sections (7,500 acres).

Table 6-15. Predicted maximum estimates of road densities assuming current Forest Plan standards and guidelines for the Nez Perce and Clearwater Forests portion of the BEA.

Management Area Type	Open Road (mi/mi sq.)	Restricted Road (mi/mi sq.)	Total Road (mi/mi sq.)
Roaded / developed lands (241.5 sq. mi. approx.)	0.28 (0.7 / 0.16) ^a	0.17 (0.38 / 0.10)	0.45 (1.08 / 0.26)
Unroaded / essentially undeveloped (983 sq. mi. approx.)	(UK / 0.04)	(UK / 0.05)	0.21 (0.48 / 0.09)
Wilderness & proposed lands (Selway-Bitterroot & FCRNRW)	0	0	0

^a Table data presented in format: Total for both Forests (Nez Perce Data / Clearwater Data).

Predictions of maximum future road densities are based on the distribution of 25, 50, 75, and 100% elk objectives within each management allocation along with a reasoned estimate of probable road density thresholds and other likely influences of current Forest Plan standards and guidelines. Though no plans are in place to harvest timber from the “unroaded/essentially undeveloped” lands on the Nez Perce Forest at the present time, the estimate above provides a worst-case analysis for the purpose of this estimation only. However, the Clearwater Forest has plans to develop “unroaded/essentially undeveloped” areas, and the above road densities are calculated to reflect those plans.

Appendix 10 - Memorandum on Habitat Security for Grizzly Bears

Other Forests within the BEA include the Lolo, Bitterroot, Panhandle, and Challis. Of these, the Bitterroot and Challis portions within the BEA are totally wilderness. The Lolo portion is the Great Burn proposed wilderness, which has 2.5 miles of seasonal road, and 1 mile of closed road. The Idaho Panhandle Forest portion of the BEA is contained within the St. Joe Ranger District, and is approximately 50% proposed wilderness (Mallard Larkins Pioneer Area, 78,500 acres) and semi-primitive recreation, and has few or no proposed roads. The remaining approximately 50% is designated as timber production land within important elk summer range, and thus has restricted road densities with long-term road closures. Road density estimates for this small area were not available.

Although much of the Primary Analysis Area for the DEIS lies outside the boundaries of the BEA, most concerns by grizzly bear biologists regarding road densities lie within the BEA. The area within the BEA, and the wilderness and immediately adjacent lands to the south, will probably be the predominant areas of use by grizzly bears within the first few decades following reintroduction. Therefore, the security for bears within the BEA will be paramount in assuring grizzly bear survival and reproduction during the critical initial stages of recovery. It is for these reasons that analyses were conducted for road densities within the BEA (Figure 6-4). And as a result, the USFWS and other agency biologists reached consensus that current Forest Plan standards meet or exceed present grizzly bear road density guidelines over much of the BEA, and therefore are adequate to assure security for grizzly bears within this landscape.



Figure 6-4. Roads inside and outside the BEA (shaded area) (from Davis and Butterfield 1991).

Appendix 10 - Memorandum on Habitat Security for Grizzly Bears

United States Department of <u>Agriculture</u>	Forest Service	Nez Perce National Forest	Rt. 2, Box 475 Grangeville, ID 83530
--	-------------------	---------------------------------	---

File Code: 2670-3
Route To: *

Date: March 4, 1996

Subject: Interim Direction for Grizzly Section 7 Consults
on Nez Perce NF portion of Bitterroot Ecosystem

To: District Rangers

Enclosed please find a copy of a November 6, 1995 letter from Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) concerning an interim approach for considering grizzly bear habitat management in or adjacent to the Selway-Bitterroot Ecosystem.

Until the EIS for implementing recovery actions for grizzly bears is completed and approved for the Bitterroot Ecosystem, I am issuing the following interim direction:

1. Continue to collect information on reported sightings of grizzly bears on the forest. Until occupancy can be confirmed and documented as permanent, consider suitable habitat within the Bitterroot Ecosystem boundaries to be "unoccupied".
2. Projects outside of the currently delineated boundary for the Bitterroot Ecosystem do not need to consider grizzly bear habitat as an issue in the NEPA process or in the Biological Assessment (BA).
3. Proposed projects within the Bitterroot Ecosystem should consider the effects to grizzly bear habitat as being incorporated into the analysis for big game habitat. As long as Forest Plan standards for big game are being met, and/or big game issues are sufficiently covered within the NEPA document, the project will be considered to be within compliance with Section 7(a)(1). For consistency purposes and to avoid confusion in the Section 7 informal consultation process, do not include a discussion on grizzly bear effects in the BA. In the interim, grizzly bear habitat will be incorporated into the effects analysis and management direction for big game habitat. If big game issues are properly dealt with in the NEPA process, then it will be assumed that grizzly bear habitat issues are also adequately addressed. This is consistent with the November 6, 1995 letter from FWS and 2670 FS Manual Direction.

If there are any questions concerning the implementation of this interim directive into on-going or future NEPA projects, please contact Steve Blair in the Supervisor's Office.


COY G. JEMMETT
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure

cc: District Wildlife Biologists



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Snake River Basin Office, Columbia Ecoregion
4696 Overland Road, Room 576
Boise, Idaho 83705

November 6, 1995

Michael King
Forest Supervisor
Nez Perce National Forest
(Attention: Steve Blair)
Route 2, Box 475
Grangeville, Idaho 83530

Subject: Level I Team Clarification Of Interim Approach For Considering Grizzly Bear
Habitats In Or Adjacent To The Selway-Bitterroot Ecosystem. (File #106.0000)

Dear Mr. King:

The Nez Perce National Forest held their first Level I Section 7 Streamlining Team meeting in Grangeville, Idaho, on September 19, 1995. During that meeting, team members requested clarification from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) as to what level of consideration the team should give to projects within or adjacent to the grizzly bear habitat provided by the Selway-Bitterroot Ecosystem. This question was triggered as a result of the Service's July 18, 1975, listing of the grizzly bear as threatened species in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Act), as amended; and subsequent discussions of the Selway-Bitterroot Ecosystem by the September 10, 1993, Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan (USFWS, 1993). The purpose of this letter is to respond to the Level I team inquiry.

Section 7(a)(2) Compliance

Pursuant to the requirements of Section 7(a)(2) of the Act, Federal agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service, are to prepare a biological assessment (BA) for their decisions involving major construction if a listed species or critical habitat may be present in the action area. The Service has not designated critical habitat for the grizzly bear within the Selway-Bitterroot Ecosystem. Thus, for purposes of determining whether a BA is required, the U.S. Forest Service need only answer the question of whether grizzly bears may occupy the Selway-Bitterroot Ecosystem. A 5-year habitat and population evaluation was completed for the Selway-Bitterroot area in 1991 (Davis and Butterfield). Although there were a number of unconfirmed grizzly bear sightings noted, there was no information indicating that grizzly bears permanently occupy the Selway-Bitterroot area. The report did confirm that the area contained sufficient amounts of quality habitat to warrant grizzly bear recovery (Servheen et al., 1991). Thus, if the U.S. Forest Service determines that grizzly bears may occupy habitat within a project area, a BA should be prepared.

Appendix 10 - Memorandum on Habitat Security for Grizzly Bears

Otherwise, preparation of a BA for grizzly bears is not mandatory, although you may document your findings and request our review at your discretion.

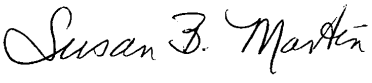
Section 7(a)(1) Consistency

Section 7(a)(1) of the Act states that Federal agencies shall, in consultation with and with the assistance of the Secretary, utilize their authorities in furtherance of the purposes of the Act by carrying out programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened species. Thus, in the event that the Forest Service determines that a project will occur in suitable yet unoccupied grizzly bear habitat, it is not mandatory that a BA be prepared. However, the Service encourages the Forest Service to discuss the project impacts to this habitat, either in a BA or National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document. Such documentation will help you make decisions that are consistent with Section 7(a)(1) of the Act, gives the Service information about how decisions might influence recovery, and allows us the opportunity to provide technical assistance to the Forest Service concerning conservation actions associated with such projects.

Although the Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan discusses the Selway-Bitterroot Ecosystem, the section dealing with implementation of recovery actions has not been finalized. The Service is currently gathering public input and preparing an Environmental Impact Statement in regard to implementing recovery actions in the Selway-Bitterroot Ecosystem. In the interim, the Forest Supervisors responsible for managing the Selway-Bitterroot evaluation area have agreed to protect suitable grizzly bear habitats by assuring that big game standards are in compliance with the Forest Plans (Servheen, 1995). In the event that a big game unit currently falls below Forest Plan standards within the Selway-Bitterroot Ecosystem, we encourage the development of projects that will improve the habitat conditions in these units. Supplemental information may be required by the Level I Team concerning the status of potential grizzly bear habitats provided by these units if big game standards are not met after implementation of projects involving habitat enhancements. We encourage you to document compliance in the project area, either in BAs or NEPA analysis.

Thank you for your inquiry into this matter. If you need further assistance please feel free to contact Bob Kibler or Alison Beck Haas of my staff at (208) 334-1931.

Sincerely,


Acting Supervisor, Snake River Basin Office

Enclosure

cc: USFWS-ES, Missoula (Servheen)
USFWS-ES, Denver (Stevens)
USFWS-FFA, Portland (Diggs)
USFWS-ES, Portland (Finn)
USFS-Clearwater NF, Orofino (Davis)
USFS-Bitterroot NF, Hamilton (Torquemada)

Literature Cited

- Davis, D. and B. Butterfield. 1991. The Bitterroot grizzly bear evaluation area: a report to the Bitterroot Technical Review Team. Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee, Denver, CO. 56 pp.
- Servheen, C., A.N. Hamilton, R. Knight, B.N. McLellan. 1991. Evaluation of the Bitterroot and North Cascades to sustain viable grizzly bear populations. Report to the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee. Boise, ID. 9 pp.
- Servheen, C. 1995. October 13, 1995, electronic mail reply to Mr. Dan Davis in regard to forwarded Section 7 grizzly bear update and telephone conversation. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Ecological Services Office. Missoula, MT. 1 pp.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1993. Grizzly bear recovery plan. Missoula, MT. 181 pp.